

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Fry's Spring Service Station

other names/site number VDHR # 104-0061

2. Location

street & number 2115 Jefferson Park Avenue not for publication N/A

city or town Charlottesville vicinity N/A

state Virginia code VA county Independent City code 003 Zip 22901

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official

Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

 entered in the National Register

 See continuation sheet.

 determined eligible for the National Register

 See continuation sheet.

 determined not eligible for the National Register

 removed from the National Register

 other (explain):

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

 X building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: COMMERCE/TRADE Sub: Specialty Store

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: COMMERCE/TRADE Sub: Specialty Store

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals
Other: Colonial/Spanish Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Slab on grade
 roof Metal: Tin
 walls Brick
 other Window Lintels and Sills: Concrete
Porte cochere cornice: Wood

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE; TRANSPORTATION

Period of Significance 1931-1957

Significant Dates 1931

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☒ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # HABS VA-1021
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

☒ State Historic Preservation Office

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☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources**10. Geographical Data**Acreage of Property 0.3040 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing

17 718100 4211400See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared Byname/title: Eryn Brennan/ Architectural Historian date January 18, 2007Organization: City of Charlottesville Department of Neighborhood Development Servicesstreet & number: 610 East Market Street telephone 434-970-3182city or town Charlottesville state VA zip code 22902**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps** A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Ruby B. Houchens (deceased). Her two sons are the current owners:James L. Houchens - 1453 Rugby Avenue, Charlottesville, VA 22903Larry Stevens Houchens - P.O. Box 474, Ivy, VA 22945telephone James Houchens - (434) 977-5137

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Built in 1931, the Fry's Spring Service Station is a one-story Colonial/Spanish Revival-style service station located one mile southwest of the University of Virginia at 2115 Jefferson Park Avenue.¹ The station is situated on a corner lot that is almost entirely paved with the exception of a group of medium-sized trees lining the eastern border of the lot. Multi-unit residential blocks occupy the area to the east and south while detached one- and two-story residences are located to the north. Small-scale, one-story commercial buildings are located west of the station.

The exterior exhibits a clear Colonial/Spanish Revival-style with conspicuous references to the local Jeffersonian architectural vocabulary evident in the cornice treatment of the porte cochere and use of Tuscan columns. In contrast, the interior possess a traditional commercial layout consisting of a large room with multiple counters, flanking restrooms, and an office and storage space.

EXTERIOR

The Fry's Spring Service Station sits on the southwest portion of a polygonal corner lot located at the intersection of Jefferson Park Avenue and Maury Avenue. The corner location of the lot provided both visual and physical accessibility for automobiles filling their tanks with gas from the pumps that once existed at the station. The pavement in front of the service station is flush with both Jefferson Park Avenue and Maury Avenue, which also facilitates an ease of access for vehicles entering and leaving the area.

The porte cochere extends nearly twenty-seven feet from the main façade and is oriented along a north/south axis. The two Tuscan columns supporting the end of the porte cochere sit on a raised concrete platform that was shared with three gas pumps until 2001. Another concrete platform that once held two gas pumps is located in the middle area underneath the porte cochere. It is similar in depth but shorter in length and parallel to the end platform. The columns are constructed of brick that has been parged and painted white. The capitals of the Tuscan columns slightly protrude from the undecorated architrave and frieze above. The cornice and roofline extend several inches beyond the plane of the frieze to accommodate the regularly spaced light fixtures nestled in the soffit of the cornice on the south, east, and west sides of the porte cochere. The lights remain functional and historically served to illuminate the pump area for customers. The hipped roof of the porte cochere is covered with tin shaped in the form of Spanish clay tiles. The tray ceiling underneath the porte cochere exhibits some architectural embellishments,

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including a series of panels carved out of the soffit of the architrave.

The articulation of the main façade, or south elevation, is symmetrically composed. The unpainted Flemish-bond and English-bond brick veneer exterior walls are in good condition. A triple-arched opening featuring the main entry doorway flanked by two windows is sandwiched between two Doric pilasters that denote the beginning of the porte cochere above. The windows located under the arches on either side of the entrance are large, fixed panes, with semicircular fixed windows set in the top portion underneath the arch. Flanking the pilasters on each side of the porte cochere are one over one, double-hung sash windows with concrete sills and lintels that are painted white.

The east elevation of the original building is also a mix of English and Flemish-bonds and originally both the men's and women's restrooms were located on this side of the building. Located above the entrances to the restrooms were wooden canopies with shed roofs covered with tin tiles shaped in the form of Spanish clay tiles similar to those used on the roof. Today only one of the original canopies remains intact and it was moved above the entrance to the new men's restroom following the construction of a garage addition in 1939.

The west elevation utilizes both Flemish- and English-bond types and has two one-over-one double-hung sash windows with concrete lintels and sills that are painted white. These windows recently replaced the original six-over-six double-hung sash windows. Centered directly above the two windows is a circular vent circumscribed by brick headers to facilitate air flow in the attic space above the store.

In 1939, a garage addition that wraps around the north and east sides of the building was added to the existing building. The west façade of the addition is Flemish-bond brick veneer and has one garage opening on the west elevation and a six-pane casement window. The south façade is set back six feet from the original façade and is also Flemish bond. There are two garage door openings above which decorative brick work is displayed. The addition enclosed the original restroom intended for male customers on the east facade, hence a new male restroom was added along with the new addition on the west elevation. The original men's restroom became an employee restroom and the original women's restroom on the east side of the building remained in place. The small wood canopy roofed with tin tiles similar to those displayed on the main roof was removed from its original location and placed over the entrance of the new men's restroom.

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A similar canopy once existed over the women's restroom. The less visible east elevation of the new addition is composed of an all-stretcher bond and has one large central window six panes in width and four panes in height. The central window is flanked by two windows composed of sixteen glass blocks on either side.

The south façade of the 1939 addition uses the same material palette and brick bond as the rest of the addition. A 580 square foot painted red concrete block addition, possibly constructed shortly after the 1939 addition, was added to the rear of the building to provide storage space for tools and automobile parts. A large window similar to the large central window on the east elevation is located left of center on the concrete block addition of the south elevation. The 1939 portion of the south elevation is an all stretcher-bond veneer with one large twenty-four paned window. To the left of the large window is a small six-pane casement window, and a door is located at the southeast edge of the building.

INTERIOR

The Fry's Spring Service Station has the simple rectangular plan common for most twentieth-century gas and service stations. The front entrance opens into the main store area. The office is located on the west side of the building, and a doorway on the back wall provides access to a transitional storage area that was erected in the garage added to the original building in 1939.

The main store area still contains the original wood shelving on the west and north walls which stretch from the floor to approximately two feet below the ceiling. The original counters are located in front of the shelves and form an L-shape with a small opening in the corner to allow access behind the counters in the northeast corner of the building. Although no chimney is visible on the roof, evidence of a lower portion of a chimney exists on the rear wall of the original structure adjacent to the back door.

The long, narrow room west of the central store was originally divided into two rooms by a wall and each room had a separate entrance. The back room was the office and the front room was the bread and milk room. The service station sold bread and milk until the mid-1960s, when the wall was removed to expand the office.

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The original rear door became a passage doorway to the garage addition after it was constructed in 1939. Between the main space of the 1939 addition and the original building, a long, narrow storage area was constructed in the same year. Thus the rear passage became a shallow hallway and transitional space between the commercial area and service area. Although the small area is used as storage for small automobile parts today, prior to the 1960s it was used for the storage of alcohol when the service station had an off-premise beer license. The addition has a brick veneer on the exterior but the concrete block remains visible on the interior, and the space is used primarily as a service area. The concrete block addition constructed shortly after the 1939 addition is used as a storage area for automobile parts and tools.

As stated above, the men's and women's restrooms were originally located on the east side of the building. Despite the slight location change for customers' restrooms, both of the restrooms on the east side of the building remain in their original condition. The original men's restroom, now the employee restroom, is a small one-room facility with a toilet and hot and cold running water sink. The lower portions of the walls are covered with a light green tile capped with wood trim. The women's restroom is more lavish in that it consists of two rooms; a toilet room and a waiting room. Both rooms are decorated with blue tile with a black tile trim from the floor to approximately two feet below the ceiling. A full length mirror is incorporated into the blue and black tile in the waiting room and a radiator is located under the window. A door separates the two rooms, and the restroom also has a small mirror set in the tile above the sink.

ENDNOTES

¹ Charlottesville City Land Book, 1931. See also the survey prepared by Robert P. Brennan, "Fry's Spring Filling Station," [Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, School of Architecture, 1981] 2.

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SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The Fry's Spring Service Station was built in 1931 and represents a Colonial/Spanish Revival service station that meets National Register Criteria A and C for local significance in Charlottesville, Virginia. Regarding Criterion A, the station is important as its construction signified the decline of Charlottesville's streetcar and simultaneously the rise of automobile ownership among the white middle class. These developments also reflected early suburbanization efforts in the Fry's Springs area as well as the rise of recreation destinations in Charlottesville during the first quarter of the twentieth century. The station corresponds to Criterion C in terms of its overall design and architectural detail. The station was a standardized gas station design popularized in journals and magazines by the mid-1920s because of its efficient and logical layout.¹ However, unlike other gas stations, the Fry's Spring Station appropriated design elements from the local Jeffersonian architectural landscape and therefore blended seamlessly with the urban backdrop of the nearby University. In the face of keen competition between increasing numbers of automobile stations during this era, the architectural detailing of the Fry's Spring Service Station lent an appealing sense of familiarity to the relatively new form of the gas and service station.² Because the Fry's Spring Service Station not only continues to serve local residents as an auto service and repair station, but also visually serves as a historic anchor for the commercial district of the neighborhood, the period of significance extends from construction, 1931, through the fifty-year cut-off, 1957.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

In 1925, real estate agent Ernest R. Duff purchased the western portion of the corner lot on Jefferson Park and Maury Avenue from Gertrude Rubin, whose husband, Abraham, ran an automotive accessories store on Main Street called the Rubin-Lowe Company.³ According to an advertisement in the Charlottesville City Directory, the Fry's Springs Service Station was in operation in 1929.⁴ However, the lack of Sanborn Maps showing the Service Station prior to 1950 precludes the possibility of determining whether the station at that time is the same station that stands there today. It is likely that the original structure on the lot was the "small cabin" referred to in the Charlottesville City Land Book in 1931.⁵ The assessment of the lot in the 1932 Land Book however, shows major activity in late 1931 and includes the remark "filling station added."⁶

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Given that Duff was a real estate agent who neither lived near nor worked at the station, it is

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unlikely that he was responsible for its design. However, it is possible that he chose the standardized plan for the station from the popular journal, *The Architectural Forum*, which had published an article in 1926 identifying numerous types of filling and service stations. Indeed, the Fry's Spring Service Station closely resembles the Witt's Filling and Service Station in Lexington, Kentucky, designed by architect Frank L. Smith with its Colonial-style windows and

door, Spanish tile roof, double covered pump system, and box-shaped store.⁷ The author notes that this particular design is both "convenient and direct," and he further lauds the covered pump area as it offered the car, customer, and attendant protection from the elements during the filling process.⁸ In addition, the series of light bulbs set in the soffit of the cornice illuminated the pumps at night.

The tile roof used on the Witt's Filling Station may explain why the tin roof of the Fry's Spring Filling Station was shaped to look like clay tiles, as this is an unusual design feature in Charlottesville. It is possible that the builder or designer wanted to adhere to the standardized gas station design, but realized the impracticality of employing clay tiles on a roof in this region as they would have easily cracked and broken during the winter months. Furthermore, tin was an abundant and inexpensive roofing material in Charlottesville and required far less maintenance. The use of Tuscan columns in lieu of brick piers however, combined with the triple-arched windows and pilasters on the main façade and cornice treatment of the porte cochere, intentionally recalled the local Jeffersonian architectural vocabulary. Although the Witt's Filling Station also employed Colonial Revival features, the Fry's Spring Station clearly appropriates particular Jeffersonian elements, and hence speaks to this particular locale in terms of its architectural detail.

Another filling station constructed in Charlottesville's Belmont neighborhood in the late 1920s also employed this standardized design, complete with a tin roof hammered to look like clay tiles.⁹ The station in Belmont also utilized the series of light bulbs below the cornice to illuminate the pump area. The proliferation of automotive service centers in central Belmont in the late 1920s signified a shift in this area's economic development as it became a significant transportation corridor for the greater Albemarle County region, thus numerous filling stations were established in downtown Belmont during this period.¹⁰ While the Belmont station attests to the prevalence of this particular gas station design during the early twentieth century, it significantly differed from the Fry's Spring Filling Station as it possessed square piers and lacked

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any defining Jeffersonian architectural features.

The construction of the Fry's Spring Service Station coincided with the decline of Charlottesville's streetcar and conversely, the rise of automobile ownership among the white middle class in the City. In 1895, Captain T.O. Troy opened the Fry's Spring rail line in an attempt to draw visitors, for a fee of five cents, to the twenty-five-acre public park he had recently purchased along with several of his associates. Within a month the rail line was wildly popular, and the Fry's Spring Park became the most significant recreation destination among Charlottesville's white middle class. This development further stimulated the electrification of properties and businesses abutting the rail line. By the late 1920s however, the popularity of the automobile led to a decline in rider membership that was exacerbated by the Depression, which led to the closing of Charlottesville's streetcar system in 1935.¹¹ Thus, the establishment of the Fry's Spring Service Station responded to the rising demand for gas and service stations, as automobiles traveling to and from recreation destinations as well as some of the city's first suburbs became ubiquitous in the urban landscape.

Another significant element evident in the design of the Fry's Spring Service Station was the inclusion of commodious restrooms, which presaged the movement in the late 1930s to improve unsanitary and unattractive washroom facilities.¹² To increase patronage and compete with other gas and filling stations, in 1938 some large oil companies such as Texaco began registering their restroom facilities to guarantee cleanliness for the consumer. A white or green sign would be posted underneath the Texaco sign outside the station to inform passersby.¹³ One author noted how, "the beautifully tiled interiors...sparkled with an unprecedented cleanliness...modern, well-maintained toilet equipment matched gleaming white sinks that boasted hot and cold running water."¹⁴ Given that the restrooms at the Fry's Spring Filling Station remain in their original condition, they predated this movement by nearly ten years. The men's restroom is a simple, undecorated one-room facility with a hot and cold running water sink and toilet, while the women's restroom is composed of a toilet room and separate waiting room with sink and mirror, all of which is entirely decorated with blue and black tile and beveled mirrors in an Art Deco motif.

As the area around the Fry's Spring Service Station continually developed throughout the mid-to-late twentieth century, it became more and more difficult for the station to sell gas as it was difficult for cars to enter and exit at the busy intersection at Maury and Fontaine Avenues. The

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Houchens family, who purchased the station from the Union Oil Company of California in 1977, stopped selling gas in 2001.¹⁵ Although the original tanks installed by the Pure Oil Company in

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the mid-1950s on the west side of the building remain in situ, the oil tanks installed by Union 76 in the early 1970s were removed approximately five years ago. Although the station exists today solely as a service station, the original building, porte cochere, and gas pump areas have remained the same.

Today, the Fry's Spring Service Station sits on a heavily trafficked corner that serves as an entrance corridor to the University. Hence, the Jeffersonian architectural elements utilized in the design of the station make this building an appropriate visual entrance to the University. Furthermore, given the Station's visual presence and quality of design, it has become an icon in the Fry's Spring community. The station not only continues to serve local residents as an auto service and repair station, but also visually serves as an historic anchor for the commercial district of the neighborhood.

ENDNOTES

¹ Alexander G. Guth, "Small Buildings: The Automobile Service Station," *Architectural Forum* 45 (July 1926): 33-44.

² Ibid., 33.

³ Charlottesville City Directory, 1929. See also Deedbook 49, p. 494 located in the Charlottesville City Courthouse.

⁴ Charlottesville City Directory, 1929, p.56.

⁵ Charlottesville City Land Book, 1931.

⁶ Charlottesville City Land Book, 1932.

⁷ Alexander G. Guth, "Small Buildings: The Automobile Service Station," *Architectural Forum* 45 (July 1926): 43-44.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ The station in Belmont is on the 1929 Sanborn Map.

¹⁰ Kathleen Durham, Adriane Fowler, Margaret Grubiak, et al., "The History of the Belmont Neighborhood," 2000, located in the files at the Neighborhood Development Services office at City Hall.

¹¹ Jefferson Randolph Kean, "Charlottesville's Street Railway System and Its Entrepreneurs, 1866-1936," masters thesis, (Fairfax, Virginia: George Mason University), 258.

¹² Michael Karl Witzel, *The American Gas Station* (Barnes & Noble Books: New York, 1999), 104.

¹³ Ibid., 107.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ City of Charlottesville Deed Book 382, p.655.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Charlottesville City Directories, 1927; 1929; 1931; 1936.

City of Charlottesville Deed Book 382, p. 655, Charlottesville Courthouse.

City of Charlottesville Deed Book 178, p. 9, Charlottesville Courthouse.

City of Charlottesville Deed Book 49, p. 494, Charlottesville Courthouse.

City of Charlottesville Deed Book 38, p. 349, Charlottesville Courthouse.

City of Charlottesville Deed Book 37, p. 361, Charlottesville Courthouse.

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Howsare, Erika. "Pooling Resources." *C-Ville Weekly*, March 4-10, 2003.

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Simpson, Jamie. "Club Pools Memories for Milestone." *Charlottesville Daily Progress*, June 9, 1996.

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The nominated property is identified as Parcel 170088000 by the Charlottesville Real Estate Assessor's Office. It is a corner lot of 0.3040 acres at the corner of Jefferson Park Avenue and Maury Avenue. It is bounded on the south by Jefferson Park Avenue and on the west by Maury Avenue.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

The nominated property encompasses the land purchased by Gertrude and Abram Rubin in 1925. The boundary includes the historic Fry's Spring Service Station and land immediately surrounding the Station.

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Unless otherwise noted, all photographs are of:
FRY'S SPRING SERVICE STATION DHR File #: 104-0061
Location: Charlottesville, Virginia
Photographer: Eryn S. Brennan

SUBJECT: View of Fry's Spring Service Station
VIEW: Looking northeast on the corner of Jefferson Park Avenue and Maury Avenue
PHOTO: 1 of 8

SUBJECT: View of south façade Fry's Spring Service Station
VIEW: Looking north
PHOTO: 2 of 8

SUBJECT: View of west façade Fry's Spring Service Station
VIEW: Looking east
PHOTO: 3 of 8

SUBJECT: Detail view of the canopy located above the original men's restroom. It was moved above this men's restroom following the 1939 addition.
VIEW: Looking east
PHOTO: 4 of 8

SUBJECT: Interior view of central area and door to the office
VIEW: Looking west
PHOTO: 5 of 8

SUBJECT: Interior view of the triple arch entrance and flanking windows
VIEW: Looking south
PHOTO: 6 of 8

SUBJECT: Interior view of the women's restroom
VIEW: Looking north
PHOTO: 7 of 8

SUBJECT: Interior view of the attached women's waiting room
VIEW: Looking south
PHOTO: 8 of 8